

BROWARD COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT



HOT TOPICS

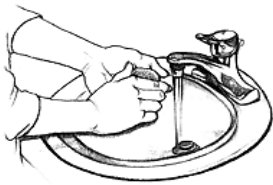
✓ The Facts on Hepatitis A

What is Hepatitis A? Hepatitis A is a liver disease caused by a virus called the Hepatitis A Virus (HAV). It makes your liver, which is a vital organ, swell and stops it from working well.

Who is at Risk For Hepatitis A? Anyone can get hepatitis A but some people are more likely than others, for example:

- People who live with someone who has hepatitis A.
- Children who attend day care and people who work in day care centers.
- Men who have sex with men.
- People who travel to other countries.

How is Hepatitis A Spread? Hepatitis A virus is spread from person to person by putting something in the mouth that has been contaminated with the stool of a person with hepatitis A. This type of transmission is called “fecal-oral.” This can happen when changing an infected baby’s diaper and then eating or drinking with your hands. Or by eating food made by someone who touched infected stool. Drinking water can also be contaminated by infected stool—usually in developing countries. Having anal sex with an infected person is another way the disease is spread. Outbreaks have occurred among users of injecting and non-injection drugs. Most infections result from contact with a household member or sex partner who has hepatitis A. Casual contact, as in the usual office, factory, or school setting, does not spread the virus.



Washing your hands helps to stop the spread of many diseases, including hepatitis A. Always wash your hands with soap and water after using the toilet, after changing diapers, before preparing foods, and before eating.

What Are The Symptoms of Hepatitis A? HAV can make you feel like you have the flu. You might feel tired, sick to your stomach, have a fever, lose your appetite and have stomach pain and diarrhea. Some people have dark yellow urine and light-colored stool and yellowish eyes and skin. But, some people don't have any symptoms. With or without symptoms, people with HAV infection can still spread the disease to others.

When do symptoms appear? Symptoms appear between 15 and 50 days after exposure with the average time of 28 to 30 days.

How is Hepatitis A Diagnosed? Diagnosis is made by a blood test that shows antibodies against the hepatitis A virus. These antibodies can be found 5-10 days after exposure to the disease.

What is The Treatment? Most people who have hepatitis A recover in a few weeks. You may need to rest in bed for several days or weeks. You will not be able to drink alcohol until you are well. The doctor may give you medicine for your symptoms. Death sometimes occurs in those people who already have some other type of liver disease.

How Can Hepatitis A be Prevented? To protect yourself against HAV, you can get the hepatitis A vaccine. The vaccine is given through a series of shots. Two shots are required for maximum protection. The second shot is given 6 to 12 months after the first one. Children must be 2 years of age or older to receive the shots. You need all of the shots to be protected. You can protect yourself and others by washing your hands with soap after using the toilet and before preparing or eating food. You can wear gloves if you have to touch other people's stool and wash your hands afterward. Drink bottled water if you are in another country (also avoid using ice cubes or washing food with tap water).



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